

HOLIFIELD

INSPIRES

WYCOMBE

INSPIRED by a marvellous midfield performance from Mick Holifield, Wycombe Wanderers swept aside the challenge of Walthamstow Avenue at Loakes Park on Saturday. Their 4-0 triumph puts them third in the Rothmans Isthmian League, just two points behind the leaders.

Although this was essentially a fine all round team display, Holifield's personal

Wycombe Wanderers 4, Walthamstow 0 REPORT BY STUART EARP

contribution was enormous. His work rate was high, his defensive work excellent, and he capped it all with a super diving header for the Blues' third goal.

When Mick is on song, Wycombe benefit accordingly and on Saturday they were just too good for a moderate Walthamstow side. Some of Wanderers football at times was of a really high standard — no mean feat in the

atrocious weather conditions which left the pitch slippery and treacherous.

The Blues welcomed back both Paul Birdseye and Tony Horseman to the side after a fortnight's absence through injury. Horseman's inclusion brought together a formidable front three which looked the strongest manager Ted Powell had fielded this season. With big Howard Kettleborough providing the

target, both 'Bodger' and Ian Pearson have been relieved of taking the 'stick' and are now free to express themselves more fully.

These two showed a good understanding — an understanding that produced two goals. But it was Kettleborough who was first to break the ice with a nicely worked goal after 12 minutes, his first league goal for the Blues. Inevitably Holifield was involved, playing the ball up the slope to Bob Davies who had overlapped intelligently. His well flighted cross beat goalkeeper Terry Moore, late of Ilford and Stortford, and Kettleborough powered a header into the far corner.

Kettleborough might have had another four minutes later but Dave Blackman saved the day for Avenue by clearing off the line. All in all, the tall striker gave the visitors' defence a testing time, for they had no one to match his stature of ability in the air.

Goalkeeper John Maskell was virtually an onlooker for much of the first half and it was 26 minutes before he was called into serious action, pushing Nash's awkward shot for a corner. This seemed to encourage Walthamstow who worked hard to keep Wycombe at bay for the rest of the half. The rain robbed the Blues of several chances and with only one goal to show for their superiority memories of the Bishop's Stortford revival a week ago were still very much in mind.

In the event there was no need to worry for Wanderers had sewn the match up within 13 minutes of the new half. They hit three goals in that time to record their first £40 bonus of the season for a three-clear-goal win.

Before the goal rush Blackman almost put through his own goal in the 46th minute. The ball went for a corner which Pearson took on the top side. Kettleborough headed back and both Holifield and Phillips tried for goal until Horseman finally snapped up the chance.

Three minutes later Holifield scored his brilliant goal. Pearson was the creator again, beating John Knapman and crossing to the far post. Holifield came storming in and launched himself full length to send a glorious diving header into the net.

The fourth goal after 58 minutes was almost as good. Pearson fed Horseman who took the ball to the bye-line, shrugging off the challenge of Trevor Blacktin. Horseman then crossed to the near post where Pearson glanced home a header from the acutest of angles. Terry Moore, no mean goalkeeper, could do nothing about any of these three goals which ended the match as a contest.

Avenue carried on gamely but they were clearly outclassed by this Wycombe display which must rate as one of the best of the season. Ironically it was Walthamstow who had the best chances to score in the rest of the game. Dick Sedgewick and Alan Hunter both had shots blocked in one attack and Keith Mead once had to clear off the line.

But the 'miss of the match' tag must go to John Dear. Brian Jackson headed a free kick across goal which found Dear in yards of space as Wycōmbe's defence stood like statues. Only Maskell faced him but Dear somehow managed to miscue his shot wide from eight yards.

Wanderers finished the game firmly in the driving seat forcing three corners in succession during the last five minutes. Wycombe will meet more difficult opposition this year but now there are definite signs of a settled team — one that has the potential to do well in Division One this year.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies, H. Kennedy, J. Priestley, M. Holifield, A. Horseman, H. Kettleborough, I. Pearson, Sub. D. Bullock (not used).

WALTHAMSTOW: T. Moore, D. Blackman, T. Blacktin, J. Knapman, R. Bradford, J. Neal, G. Nash, F. Darling (sub. B. Jackson 61 mins), A. Hunter, R. Sedgewick, J. Dear.

Referee: D. Cullen (Watford).

Half-time: 1-0. **Goalscorers,** Wycombe — Kettleborough (12), Horseman (46), Holifield (49), Pearson (58).

Attendance: 1,050